

TEA Advisory Committee

Executive Summary

1. Recognize that the TEA program as permanent, with predictable rounds of programming continuing into future years: the TEA program *will* be re-authorized in some form.
2. TEA funding to be divided into regional and state shares, based on the current 75%/25% proportion of regional/local and state funding, with regional shares to be divided up using the existing RSTP formula.
3. Investigate consolidating the 3 current state shares into one state share and focus toward defined statewide objectives while preserving the opportunity for open access for projects of broader than regional interest.
4. Seek aggressively to simplify state application of federal requirements, far more than in other programs, as far as FHWA will allow.
5. Improve communication and make the program understandable and easy to use, from the viewpoint of the kinds of agencies that do or build TEA projects.
 - *Communication with the districts and the public has improved; e-mail and phone inquiries are returned promptly to meet a self-imposed goal of responding within 24 hours after returning to the office.*
 - *A TEA workshop to train district staff on eligibility determinations and to expedite the approval process was held on October 24, 2001. One outcome of the workshop was the recommendation to develop a TEA procedures handbook for prospective applicants. We will begin developing a procedures handbook when new TEA guidelines have been established.*
 - *Training presentations have been made to MPOs and Advisory Councils to improve the understanding of the TEA program and how it works.*
 - *The TEA web site has been improved: all three state shares (Caltrans, STE and Conservation Lands) project lists have been added to it. Other improvements have been made to the site in response to public comments. An application can be down loaded from the web site. Program guidelines are also available on the web site.*
6. Get Caltrans districts, regional and local agencies working together to stay on top of project status and progress, provide realistic help when needed to local agencies doing projects, and simplify state administration of the program.
 - *Each district has a designated District Local Assistance TEA Coordinator to advise the applicants during the process using the Local Assistance Procedures Manual for guidance. We are currently updating the Manual.*
 - *Suggestions have been solicited from the districts on how to improve the TEA program. As a result, the TEA data base has been modified to assist District Local Assistance staff monitor projects.*
 - *An improved Project Change Request (PCR) process has been developed for the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP)-managed TEA share.*
7. Provide alternate ways to use federal TEA funds, to benefit smaller regions and sponsors of smaller projects. Encourage “partnering” between Caltrans and local agencies to develop larger projects.
8. Weed out “blue sky” projects with imprecise scopes, poorly defined cost estimates, and unrealistic schedules, and ensure the program invests in high priority, well-conceived projects.
 - *TEA applications are reviewed for eligibility within 5 working days of receipt; a form letter has been developed to notify the applicant of the eligibility determination.*
 - *Training was provided at the TEA Workshop to give guidance to District staff on application eligibility.*
9. Current federal laws and regulations is the starting point for any new TEA program design.